



Quality Enhancement Research Initiative

## Mental Health

MHQ-QUERI Update

February, 2005

### *Improving Medication Management for Schizophrenia*

*Schizophrenia has a lifetime prevalence of 1.3% and affects more than two million Americans.<sup>1</sup> The VHA treats approximately 100,000 patients with schizophrenia each year, accounting for 11.7% of total healthcare costs.<sup>2</sup> Research indicates that medication treatment for schizophrenia often does not follow evidence-based recommendations regarding antipsychotic dose and use of newer antipsychotics.<sup>3,4</sup> Consequently, it is important from both quality of care and economic perspectives to improve the patterns of medication management for schizophrenia and to assist in the development of optimal treatment for patients with this disorder.*

#### **Antipsychotic Treatment Improvement Program**

Recognizing the potential for improved management and outcomes of veterans with schizophrenia, VHA developed a comprehensive clinical practice guideline for this condition in 1997, and updated and approved it in 2004.<sup>5</sup> The antipsychotic dosing recommendations in these guidelines are based on the following findings:

- Moderate antipsychotic doses are efficacious in reducing schizophrenia symptoms,<sup>6,7</sup> and
- Guideline-concordant antipsychotic doses have been associated with superior symptom outcomes.<sup>8,9</sup>

Noting the variation among VA facilities in the use of moderate antipsychotic doses,<sup>3,4</sup> the Mental Health Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (MH-QUERI) developed an innovative program to reduce antipsychotic dosing that occurs outside of recommended ranges. MH-QUERI's Antipsychotic Treatment Improvement Program was developed in collaboration with the South Central MIRECC and VISN 16 Mental Health Product Line.

#### **What the Antipsychotic Treatment Improvement Program Can Do for You**

The MH-QUERI Program has been initiated at 4 facilities in VISN 16 as part of a quality enhancement demonstration project. Findings from this initial project show that it reduces antipsychotic prescribing at doses above the guideline-recommended range and reduces pharmacy costs for antipsychotics. Further, participating clinicians reported positive experiences with the Program's educational and support materials.

If you are concerned about your facility's antipsychotic dosing patterns and/or costs, the MH-QUERI Program offers pharmacy database diagnostic tools to assess your situation and an intervention program that are now available for use throughout VHA.

The Program includes:

- Patient education materials,
- Clinician education and support tools, and
- Automated performance data on antipsychotic prescribing practices.

Materials and assistance in implementing the Program are available through the MH-QUERI Coordinating Center.

Please see the back page for contact information.

## How Do I Learn More?

For information about MH-QUERI and/or the Antipsychotic Treatment Improvement Program, contact:

**Jeffrey L. Smith, PhD candidate**

MH-QUERI Co-Implementation Research Coordinator

Phone: (501) 257-1066

E-mail: [jeffrey.smith6@med.va.gov](mailto:jeffrey.smith6@med.va.gov)

## Web Resources

For more information about MH-QUERI, visit their website at:

[www.va.gov/mhqueri/](http://www.va.gov/mhqueri/)

For more information about the QUERI program in general, visit the national QUERI website at: [www.hsrp.research.va.gov/queri](http://www.hsrp.research.va.gov/queri)

### References:

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### MH-QUERI Executive Committee:

Research Coordinator, **Richard Owen, MD** and Clinical Coordinator, **Stephen Marder, MD** lead the Executive Committee. The MH-QUERI Executive Committee includes other experts in the field of mental health: Frederic Blow, PhD; **Geoffrey Curran, PhD** (Co-Implementation Research Coordinator); Nancy Jo Dunn, PhD; Susan M. Essock, PhD; Ellen Fischer, PhD; Martha Gerrity, MD, PhD; JoAnn Kirchner, MD; Miklos Losonczy, MD, PhD; Susan McCutcheon, RN, EdD; Lisa Rubenstein, MD, MSPH; **Jeff Smith, PhD candidate** (Co-Implementation Research Coordinator); William Van Stone, MD; and John Williams, Jr, MD, MHS.